

Let Common Court

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Many unsafe driving habits can be eliminated simply by practicing common courtesy. Avoid these offensive behaviors, which are likely to provoke aggression:

Gestures. Obscene or offensive gestures irritate other drivers. Be aware any gesture may be misinterpreted by another driver.

Car phones. Don't let your phone become a distraction. Car-phone users are perceived as being poor drivers and a traffic hazard. Data shows that aggressive drivers are particularly irritated by fender-benders with motorists who were talking on the phone. Using a hands-free device with a cellphone is required while driving on DoD property, as well as in many states. If you need to use the phone, pull over first.

Displays. Refrain from displaying a bumper sticker, slogan or vanity license plate that may be considered offensive.

Eye contact. If a motorist tries to pick a fight, don't make eye contact. Get out of the way without acknowledging the other motorist. If the driver follows you, don't go home; instead, go to a police station or location where you can get help and where there are witnesses.

Aggressive tailgating. Riding the bumper of the vehicle in front of you is both annoying and unsafe. Instead, maintain a safe distance. In most rear-end accidents, the rearmost vehicle is the one at fault.

Aggressive horn use. Leaning on the horn to express anger is aggravating. Use your horn sparingly.

Aggressive headlight use. Flashing headlights to denote irritation is rude and unsafe.

Lane blocking. Don't block the passing lane on multiple-lane highways. Allow vehicles to pass you. If cars are piling up behind you, it's not your job to keep them from speeding.

Signal use. Don't change lanes without using your signal, and make sure you can change lanes without cutting off another driver. After changing lanes or turning, turn off your signal.

Failure to turn. In many areas, right turns are allowed after a complete stop for a red light, unless an intersection is marked otherwise. Avoid the right lane if you are not turning right.



Keeping Peace

Using common courtesy is the single best way not to provoke an aggressive driver. Here are some common things you can do to keep peace on our roadways:

Parking. Don't take up more than one parking space. Don't park in a space reserved for people with disabilities, unless you are disabled. Don't open your door into the car next to you. When parallel parking, don't tap the vehicles in front of or in back of you. Always look carefully before backing out of a parking space.

Headlight use. Keep headlights on low beam, except where lighting conditions are poor. Dim your high beams for oncoming traffic, when approaching a vehicle from the rear, or when another vehicle is passing you. Also, if you are using your windshield wipers, your lights should be (and may be required) on to allow others to see you during the inclement conditions.

Merging. When traffic permits, move out of the right-hand lane of a freeway to allow vehicles easier access from onramps. Use the acceleration lane to do

Easy Be Your Guide



just that—accelerate. When possible, reach the speed at which traffic is flowing in the acceleration lane before merging onto the highway, so you don't impede movement.

Blocking traffic. If you're driving a cumbersome or slow-moving vehicle, pull over when possible to allow traffic to pass you. Don't block the road by stopping to have a conversation with another driver or a pedestrian.

Alarms. Be sure you know how to turn off the anti-theft alarm on any vehicle you're driving. If you are buying an alarm, buy one that turns off automatically after a short time.

Reducing Stress

Many times, it's our daily stressors that increase our aggressive-driving habits. Being able to compartmentalize behind the wheel is vital to the safety of you and other drivers. The commute to work is a part of life we all must accept. Here are some tips that may make your commute easier:

- Allow plenty of time for the trip.

- Listen to soothing music.
- Realize that it uses more fuel to drive aggressively.
- Understand that you can't control the traffic, only your reaction to it.
- Ask yourself, "If a cop pulled up behind me right now, would I drive any different?" Nothing will put an aggressive driver in his/her place faster than seeing a police car in the rearview mirror.

If you're an aggressive driver and your car had your name, address and phone number on it, would you still drive the same way? We willingly act aggressive and rude behind the wheel because we know such behavior usually goes without punishment. "Other drivers never will know who I am, so I can be as rude as I want, right?" probably is a common thought. But have you ever been a discourteous driver and then realized it was your neighbor you just cut off? How did you feel afterward? You never know who the driver of the other vehicle is, so try to consider everyone your neighbor.

Keep your cool. Consider the details of who else is on the road. The person you hate might be someone's grandmother who has to drive herself and has less ability to keep up with the heavy traffic. Finally, if you're tempted to drive irrationally, ask yourself, "Is it worth being killed? Is it worth going to jail?"

Adjust Your Attitude

Give the other driver the benefit of the doubt. We all make mistakes. Don't assume that all unsafe driving actions are intentional or personal. Be polite and courteous, even if the other driver isn't. Keep your cool; think before you react. **S**

Resources:

- Road Rage Is More Common Than You Think, <http://roadragers.com/>
- Automobile Driving, <http://www.drivers.com/topic/31/>
- Congressional Testimony on Aggressive Driving, <http://www.drdriving.org/articles/testimony.htm>
- Distracted Driving/Road Rage Resources, <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/toolbox/traffic/distractions/default.htm>